

**Kentucky Adult Education Advisory Committee**  
**Minutes**  
**December 14, 2007**

**Providers in attendance:** Vicki Boyd, S.J. Brennan, Jim Canipe, Cris Crowley, Veronica Gayle, Kathryn Hardman, Renae Harrison, Pam Hatton, Rodney Johnson, Karen McLeod, Peg Russell, Julie Scoskie, Bev Thomson, and Sugar Willey.

**Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Reecie Stagnolia welcomed members. He explained Sarah Hawker was attending a special Council on Postsecondary Education meeting at which Aims McGuiness, a nationally recognized expert on higher education policy and finance and chief consultant of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce's blue ribbon task force to assess Kentucky's progress toward achieving the goals established in the Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997, was presenting an overview of the task force's report and discussing findings and recommendations. He indicated she would join the Advisory Committee meeting as soon as possible and conveyed her apologies.

**Budget Update**

Mr. Stagnolia gave an update on the status of the KYAE budget request. The Council on Postsecondary Education's budget request includes a \$2 million increase for the first year and another \$2 million or \$4 million increase in year two of the biennium. This would represent a 16 percent increase in KYAE's funding. He noted the Kentucky Association for Adult and Continuing Education (KAACE) has been very involved in advocacy efforts for the adult education budget request and acknowledged the positive feedback from the recent KAACE/KYAE Institute in getting people informed on how to become active at a grassroots level.

**2008 Meeting Dates**

Mr. Stagnolia advised members the 2008 KYAE Advisory Committee meetings dates are set and a list of the dates included in the meeting materials.

**Professional Development (PD) Research Overview**

Sandy Kestner noted that committee members have a strong professional development base and many have been used either as trainers or have helped provide professional development in some form. KYAE wants to improve the state's professional development system. Committee members are familiar with PDUs, SDAs and PDTrack. She noted we offer a variety of activities – perhaps too many. We know some things are working well, some things are not. We want to get ideas from you on how to improve professional development.

Marilyn Lyons and Sandy Kestner reviewed *Research on Professional Development and Teacher Change: Implications for Adult Basic Education* by Cristine Smith and

Marilyn Gillespie. The chapter was selected because it includes the latest research on not only the differences between professional development for the K-12 system versus adult basic education instructions, but also on the challenges we face.

Major findings are:

- “Adult basic education teachers work mostly part time.
- Adult basic education teachers may leave the field more often than do K–12 teachers.
- Adult basic education teachers are often required to teach in multiple subject areas.
- Whereas the majority of adult basic education teachers are qualified to, and have taught in K–12, they have scant formal education related to teaching adults.
- In-service preparation is adult basic education teachers’ primary form of professional development.
- Adult basic education teachers are not consistently funded to participate in in-service professional development.
- Adult basic education teachers have access mostly to short-term training and conferences.
- Systemic constraints hinder adult basic education teachers’ ability to participate in professional development.”<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Kestner noted the research indicates job-embedded training is the most effective professional development method. We are hearing more about the benefit of teacher communities. At the state level, we know we need to work more closely with program directors on how to do job-embedded professional development. We know we need to help teachers use data. We know we need to help teachers reflect more.

The traditional professional development model is typically longer in duration. Teachers are to take what they learn in workshops back to learning centers and apply it.

Kentucky adult educators need to know that when we offer professional development trainings/workshops/seminar, the training and best practices are research-based.

Instructors and practitioners need to view themselves as adult education professionals and see the employment as worthwhile and a fulfilling job.

Many adult educators didn’t grow up wanting to be in adult education. Adult education has a prevalent part-time job culture. There is no career path.

In adult education, instructors miss the mentoring piece that K-12 student teachers receive by being mentored by an experienced teacher.

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<sup>1</sup>*Research on Professional Development and Teacher Change: Implications for Adult Basic Education* by Cristine Smith and Marilyn Gillespie.

Our programs' success is based upon student success, so students and student needs should be the driving force for everything we do.

It was noted when measuring the impact of professional development on student outcomes, the outcomes are sometimes dependent upon other factors and content.

There was discussion about professional development costs. Traditional professional development serves the masses. Some say traditional methods are more costly – 11 percent of providers attend conferences, but 40-50 percent of professional development funds are spent on conferences.

Is there value in training of long-duration, if the training does not have follow-up activity? KYAE invested heavily into KAELI, but once the training was completed, there was no follow-up training or activity.

A major challenge faced by adult educators is the target is always moving. Students and student needs are always changing. What you think you need to know and offer today may not be what you need two months from now.

In the K-12 model, there is managed enrollment. In adult education, if a community has a plant closure, that has an immediate resulting impact on the number of students and types of services/student needs with little advance warning.

Other challenges/differences between adult education and K-12 systems is that K-12 instructors know what core content is needed and teach to one grade level – in adult education, instructors need to be subject matter experts for 1<sup>st</sup> thru 12<sup>th</sup> grade in math, reading and writing. In some adult education classrooms, instructors have gone back to teaching to the middle – in a class of 20 people, typically four to five at the lowest functional levels are lost, ten in the middle are receiving instruction at the appropriate level, and four or five are bored. It was suggested learning stations whereby instruction is provided to smaller groups based upon functional level and the instructor rotates among groups might be a method of dealing with multi-level instructional needs within classrooms. It was agreed that professional development is needed to give instructors the skills to teach at multiple levels.

Professional development trainings are needed to provide instructors with the skills to assist students in transitioning to postsecondary education

There was general consensus that it was beneficial to allow people from the same program to participate together in workshops/trainings because it allows them to support one another when they return to the learning center. However, this might not be possible for small programs where there may only be two or three instructors.

Sugar Willey reported on the success of establishing reflection pools for ESL instructors. Instructors have built a community reflecting on teaching strategies – they see the importance of the reflection piece of professional development. Until recently, there had been very little instruction on how to teach ESL.

It was agreed that although SDA's make reflection time a countable activity, it is hard to find time for it. The group agreed SDAs are good because it allows instructors to research new strategies which improves buy-in, because the research is their own.

There was a suggestion that it would be good to have videotapes showing what good instruction looks like.

There was consensus that instructors are making use of student performance data on a daily basis.

It was suggested that KYAE consider providing training to program directors on how to provide job-embedded professional development.

Dr. Kestner indicated we hear anecdotally from some instructors who report they won't be allowed to implement new strategies at their local center. Providing training to program directors might help resolve these issues.

There was general agreement with the research regarding how individual characteristics influence how much instructors change from professional development. Those with fewer years of experience, those who began their career teaching in adult education rather than the K-12 system and those with a bachelor's degree or less changed more. Individuals with years of experience or advanced education as less likely to change.

It was acknowledged that we know we get better quality with full-time instructors, but there are many factors that necessitate part-time instructors. The cost of benefits is so expensive that it precludes the program's ability to hire many full-time employees with the financial resources available for program operations. And, since the benefit packages are set by different fiscal agents, there isn't a way to standardize the benefits packages for full-time Kentucky adult educators. It was agreed programs need a strong foundation or core group of full-time instructors, but part-time instructors are needed to make the doors go round and to help meet program enrollment goals.

Other factors include teacher working conditions. There is an aura of instability in adult education. Adult educators don't feel they can make a career out of it. What is the career ladder? What is the career path?

Julie Scoskie noted a few years ago when KYAE had regional professional development coordinators due to Jefferson County's size, she was lucky enough to have a person assigned to Jefferson County. This was the best of times when a dedicated professional development coordinator was available and training was an inch wide and a mile deep, rather than an inch deep and a mile wide. She noted that Spencer County with one full-time person and one part-time person to operate their center, would find it difficult to have embedded professional development due to staff size, but if it were offered on a regional basis, it might be possible.

Reecie Stagnolia suggested thinking about professional development focused around content areas as opposed to a regional or geographic focus.

Sarah Hawker joined the meeting. She reported that during Dr. Aims McGuinness' presentation of findings from the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce Task Force on Postsecondary Education, adult education was recognized as essential to Kentucky's growth. A copy of the Kentucky Chamber report and PowerPoint slides were provided to Advisory Committee members.

### **Professional Development Survey and Quality Professional Development**

Sarah Hawker noted we have a lot of information about KYAE professional development from the Professional Development Survey and the September Advisory Committee breakout sessions which identified key issues in professional development. When you look at teacher qualifications and education levels, there are some disconnects and really interesting aspects about instructors that informs us.

The primary objective of the professional development survey was to collect information about instructors and curricula from ABE and ASE levels and about the type of professional development that was needed. The Professional Development Practitioner's Advisory Team assisted Marilyn Lyons and Sandy Kestner in developing the survey.

The survey was issued to over 1,100 instructional staff, aides and program directors. The initial deadline was August, but KYAE extended the deadline until September in order to increase the response rate. There were 707 responses, but respondents didn't answer every question. There was at least one response from all 120 counties, and an overall 60 percent response rate.

It was noted that 41 percent of staff had 1-5 years of experience in adult education. In eastern Kentucky, the average was 10 years, but in other regions and the state as a whole, the average was 1-5 years of experience in adult education.

Of the respondents, 39 percent had taught 1-5 years with 27 percent reporting 1-5 years of teaching experience outside adult education, either in a K-12 or college setting. Sixty-nine percent had teaching experience outside adult education before beginning to teach in adult education.

We are a well-educated workforce. Thirty-eight percent of respondents have a Bachelor's degree, thirty nine percent have a Master's degree, nineteen percent have a Rank 1, and one percent has a Doctorate.

Of the respondents, six instructors teach less than one hour per week. Slightly more than half teach 1-19 hours per week. General consensus is that is reflective of the number of part-time staff employed by programs.

Kathryn Hardman suggested KYAE consider establishing a different designation of what constitutes a full-time or part-time employee. She noted defining full time as 20 or more hours is a K-12 system designation.

Respondents indicated 56 percent of instruction was for individuals or groups of 2-5, while 44 percent of instruction is for groups of 6 or more. It was noted more people must be doing managed enrollment than was originally known as reflective of the 106 respondents who reported providing instruction to groups of 10 or more.

Renae Harrison asked if it were possible to distinguish responses from full-time or part-time staff. Marilyn Lyons indicated the survey did not ask if the staff person was a full-time or part-time staff person. She noted the demographics of the respondents are very similar to staff demographics in AERIN.

Sarah Hawker was surprised by the number of respondents interested in pursuing a certificate. It was suggested there needs to be some sort of recognition for someone who meets all qualifications to be an adult educator. The recognition must have merit and require work to achieve it.

Ms. Hawker noted that we have great teachers and as we look at data, we see we have well-qualified teachers and program directors. How do we instill a sense of professionalism in the field? Because adult education is so different from K-12, each person must take personal responsibility and initiative – a desire to learn and to take professional development workshops rather than “I’m taking a professional development course to get my PDU.” How do we cultivate the culture and sense of “I need to know X” to be a better teacher or administrator?

When you look at instructor confidence on assessments, 60 percent are very confident in using assessments to evaluate student progress, but only 45 percent were very confident in helping the student set goals. General consensus of the group was that this is reflective of the personality of many adult educators who wouldn’t grade themselves high. With such a wide range in subject matter content and grade levels, few adult educators would consider themselves to be confident in all areas. Helping students to set realistic goals takes time and instructors don’t always have that time. It was acknowledged another looming issue when helping students set goals is how it impacts AERIN and the program’s performance data.

Peg Russell suggested respondents are also influenced by activities. Areas in which they are actively engaged on a daily basis, they feel confident and competent, but they are not actively engaged in every area on a daily or even weekly basis and thus are not confident in every area.

Program director responses reflect 46 percent are very confident and 40 percent are confident about using data to inform decisions with 48 percent confident about developing a student retention plan. The first step in a student retention plan is to use data.

Cris Crowley noted data is data and it reflects the past. A student retention plan is ongoing and futuristic – it can't be totally based upon last year's data. As a director, she is confident in what was, but doesn't feel as confident in predicting what will come, especially during this transition year. It was noted so much is unpredictable and out of our control. Marilyn Lyons suggested data be used to inform, to help guide our decisions and to help determine what we have done well. Psychologically, we all know we can improve since we don't have 100 percent student retention.

Cris noted she did have a written plan of strategies prior to this year. This year, she is trying one thing for six months and then changing tactics in January to take advantage of the transitional year to see what will generate the best student outcomes.

Julie Scoskie noted she has reviewed of Jefferson County's data for the first six months of the year. Jefferson County is hitting quality targets but not enrollment targets, and she acknowledged considering shifting the focus from quality back to quantity in order to achieve the enrollment goal.

Cris Crowley reiterated it is the moving target that makes program directors doubt our ability to lead. We have all embraced change and believe in the New Framework, but it is an culture shift. She has tried to develop short-term goals, but some things are moving targets. She noted she has continued to try new things, to shift focus and to figure out the best plan for her program. She added at this time, I can't tell what will work, but I can say what I feel will work and what I'm going to try.

General consensus was that program directors need more opportunities to meet and network with other program directors. Directors need professional development in order to help their staff deal with students with such varying needs -- students change, communities change, college entrance is low -- we need the skills to help students succeed.

Sarah Hawker asked how we design different professional development, what form, and for whom to help get quality.

Karen McLeod stated few program directors were hired with an administrative background. Many administrators were instructors who moved into leadership roles. She noted the Leadership Institute was the most useful PD she had experienced in 25 years with adult education. It helped her to think of herself as a program leader, rather than a teacher heading the program.

Kathryn Hardman noted there currently are not strong professional development opportunities for program directors.

When comparing respondents' confidence about reading instruction, the majority of respondents indicate they are confident or very confident, but Kentucky GED reading scores do not compare favorably to the rest of the nation.

Several possible reasons were discussed. It was suggested many students come to adult education less prepared by Kentucky's K-12 system than other states, so they come into adult education functioning at a lower level.

There was a question as to whether other states have the same GED score requirements as Kentucky. B.J. Helton indicated other states may have jurisdictional requirements like our test-readiness certification, but the standard score is the same.

Kathryn Hardman suggested it may be that the primary focus of most of our students is to earn a GED. If a student tests above a 450 in TABE reading, they know what they need to know to pass the GED reading test, so we don't teach reading. We instead focus our attention on other areas to bring the student up to what is needed to pass the GED. It isn't that instructors don't know how to teach reading, it is perhaps that we are not teaching it. Just because a student passed the GED reading test doesn't mean he or she received instruction from an adult education teacher.

Marilyn Lyons noted KYAE put a lot of emphasis onto professional development for reading instruction – KAELI – but students of non-KAELI instructors had higher reading scores.

Pam Hatton and Kathryn Hardman agreed that we give the student what they need to reach the immediate goal. Pam indicated we don't always have the luxury of 12 or more hours of time with the student. Kathryn noted students have little patience and a demonstrated willingness to quit.

Kathryn indicated she is able to see the GED scores for her students and her perception is that students are not as strong on the mechanics. So much focus has been placed on the essay that the mechanics have started to slip. It was suggested this was the K-12 portfolio writing impact. She suggested we need to provide professional development not on how to teach, but rather what to teach.

Renae Harrison suggested perhaps we need to teach students how to take a test. Kathryn noted one week before each GED exam, her program teaches test taking skills.

Cris asked if there was any indication on the national level why there was a decrease.

Bev Thomson noted we're only five percent below the nation which in her opinion is pretty good when half of Kentucky counties function below Mexico. Sarah Hawker noted, however, that our scores are declining.

Julie Scoskie asked if the decline in scores has anything to do with Kentucky's aggressive enrollment goals. Ms. Hawker reminded members that enrollment goals have been decreased by 40 percent to help programs achieve a better balance between quality and quantity.

Marilyn Lyons advised that when comparing Kentucky's enrollment to other states, we are one of the lowest for in the number of students retained 12 or more hours. She

noted that in terms of NRS data for average hours of instruction, number of enrollments, and scores, we're at the bottom in the nation. When comparing 2000 U.S. Census data, we're also at the bottom.

Ms. Hawker noted there seems to be more consternation and attention on the NRS 12-hour minimum in Kentucky than in other states. In Illinois, anyone who came to the program received instruction. If the individual stayed for over 12 hours, they were reported.

Vicki Boyd asked if other state have enrollment goals. She acknowledged the need for quality and the reduced enrollment goal, but reported her program's enrollment goal number is still there and drives her.

Sarah Hawker noted there is legislative awareness of our success in getting people into our programs and we have state and federal goals, so we cannot eliminate the enrollment goal. We have, however, had a 40 percent reduction in enrollment goals.

Julie Scoskie asked for an opportunity to help KYAE brainstorm. She acknowledged the field realizes the agency is in a difficult position.

### **PD Opportunities and Format**

Survey respondents were asked to indicate professional development opportunities in which they would participate if they were available.

- Techniques for teaching students with different learning styles – 68 percent
- Using varied instructional strategies – 65 percent
- Teaching multiple levels in the same classroom – 64 percent
- Techniques for helping students develop good study skills – 54 percent
- Strategies for preparing students for postsecondary education – 53 percent
- Lesson planning – 42 percent

They were also asked to respond to preferred format of PD offerings.

- Action-based research – 9 percent
- College credit – 31 percent
- Study circle – 31 percent
- Web-based training – 38 percent
- Self-directed activity – 38 percent
- Full day workshops – 46 percent
- Half day workshops – 60 percent

Sandy Kestner indicated KYAE has spent a lot of money on more intensive forms of professional development, but people aren't participating. Kathryn Hardman suggested if an incentive or a guaranteed pay-off were given, more people might participate. She suggested possibly offering a stipend if a staff person completes the New Teach Institute. Or, is there a way to offer a guaranteed that if a person completed a certain

training and applied the techniques and strategies taught, that student scores would increase.

Kathryn Hardman noted she is hesitant to invest a lot of professional development time and money on new staff persons, because the training they receive really benefits the next year's services and they may not stay. For new teacher training, there needs to be buy-in not only from the teacher, but also from the program director.

Program directors must take into consideration the time required for staff to participate in trainings as well as the travel costs associated with the trainings. If a professional development offering requires the person to attend three two-day sessions a year, it is disruptive to the learning center schedule, because someone else has to cover for them. It was suggested that perhaps professional development sessions could be scheduled twice a year and programs could be shut down for a specified length of time to that staff could attend training.

Julie Scoskie noted many part-time teachers work during the day and with the majority of professional development opportunities only available during the day, it impacts their ability to attend.

There was a suggestion that the professional development schedule be set and released up to a year in advance to assist program directors in planning. It was also suggested that more trainings be offered during summer months, since many part-time staff are K-12 instructors.

The group discussed the possibility of shutting programs down for a week in August and a week in January for staff training. There was consensus that it is easier to plan and not to interfere with center operations, with advance notice of training schedules.

Reecie Stagnolia noted that more states are embracing managed enrollment offering a six week program then off a week to handle data, paperwork, and orientation. Perhaps, we could carve out time for professional development in the off week.

S. J. Brennan noted a new plan her staff are beginning in January 2008. The center will be closed the first Friday of every month for a staff meeting and professional development training. She noted staff want to be good teachers, and we need to make sure they have the appropriate tools to do their jobs effectively. She noted in some respects it may hurt, because the center will not be open to students on that day. This date is to be a sacred, protected time used for reflection and professional development which will be submitted for professional development credit. In the short-term it hurts, because of the time investment, but in the long-term it will strengthen the staff.

Sandy Kestner noted we hear June is a "down month" for K-12 teachers. To allow K-12 teachers who also teach in adult education, KYAE has considered the possibility of allowing June professional development trainings to count toward the next year's professional development activities. The group consensus to this idea was positive.

Marilyn Lyons identified the top reasons respondents gave for participating in professional development.

1. To learn new instructional strategies
2. To learn techniques which I can use immediately
3. To fulfill PD requirements
4. To obtain information on how adults learn
5. To obtain a new perspective on teaching
6. To network with other educators.

There was surprise that the number six response was not higher on the list raising questions about the range between the top and bottom reasons. It was noted some people don't think there is any value to professional development.

B.J. Helton and Meryl Becker-Prezocki noted when considering instructor confidence levels, many are confident in delivering traditional instruction, but they don't know how to adjust instruction for a student with a recognized disability or learning disability.

Meryl asked how many students do we see who simply come in to take the GED Official Practice Test and are able to immediately get their GED? The last reading class for many of our students was elementary education. Reading isn't taught in middle or high school. If adult education doesn't teach reading, the next class for many of our students is development education reading in a postsecondary education setting.

Sarah Hawker thanked members for the active discussion. She noted the survey results have raised some issues in her mind.

The Program Director has a huge role in determining professional development for staff. It involves PDTrack; we know we need to have a discussion about that. Directors need to use data, knowledge and intuition about instructors. If teachers get what they need, then students will get what they need. We need to be sure that we're giving program directors appropriate professional development from the most mundane to the philosophical. We need to be sure we're giving you the help you need.

We need to make sure people understand how to analyze data - not just look at how the program is doing, but understand how each instructor and student is doing. Does the instructor find value in the data? Do they know what the data tells them? Is there ownership? How can we instill that in them?

Ms. Hawker noted we need to discuss the concept of PDUs. We didn't talk about it much today, but whenever we go to conferences, we hear "I've got to get my PDUs." How do we deal with this culture? How do we help the field get out of that mind set? It's something we need to grapple with.

How can we raise individuals' expectations of themselves? People rise to expectations. How do we find a way to raise our expectations of what we can achieve and what we can do? How do we model high expectations? How do we communicate this to the field?

Maybe we have made a good step in that we have quality as our policy. How do we have quality and not feel as pushed as we did under enrollment goals? We need to find a middle ground. We can serve lots of people. We have lots of people who need our services. How do we find the proper balance? We can't do the same things and expect different outcomes.

Ms. Hawker suggested some members get together again to continue this discussion after they have had a chance to review the data more thoroughly and for conduct additional research. She encouraged members to think about statewide options.

Julie Scoskie noted that the fact Kentucky numbers are going down is most disturbing. She indicated a need to know what states are at the top, what states are going back up, who they are, what they look like, what they are doing.

It was noted that instructional assistants whose primary role it is to perform data entry must attend trainings that are not really relevant in order to get the required PDUs.

It was noted many people are anxious to get the PDUs so that they have the requirement covered and then they can pick and choose.

It was noted PDTrack revolves around and impacts how people view professional development.

Kathryn Hardman requested funding data for states that are doing well to see how it compares to Kentucky's funding.

Reecie Stagnolia commented on an earlier discussion in which there was general consensus that directors are reluctant to invest a lot of professional development time and money on new employees. He noted the philosophy of "What if we train them and they leave?" Maybe we should ask ourselves, "What if you don't and they stay?"

He noted we have known for years there are student retention issues and instructor retention issues. It is hoped that as we settle into New Framework we can focus on retention of instructors and get beyond new teacher training. Perhaps if we have more managed enrollment, we would need to hire fewer people.

Kathryn Hardman suggested KYAE needs to have more confidence that program directors know what constitutes good quality and can make valid judgments about the professional development needs for their instructional staff.

Sarah Hawker advised that in response to suggestions and requests, KYAE is planning a Program Director Institute in August. It will be a required meeting and we will give the dates issues as soon as possible.

Sandy Kestner thanked members for today's discussion and noted the idea of program shutdown weeks for professional development was intriguing. She asked members to e-mail any other thoughts or ideas to her.

**Expense Vouchers**

Members were asked to sign expense vouchers.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting is March 14, 2008.